

LAKE ICE DANGERS

Each winter, after the ice forms on Washington's waters, outdoor enthusiasts enjoy fishing, skating and other activities. Though there are many opportunities to enjoy the winter weather, remember that the low-lying lakes around JBLM will never be thick enough to walk on.

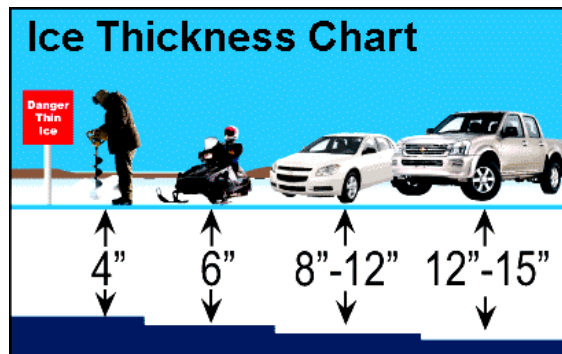
Before going out onto a frozen lake, pond or river, it's important to take safety precautions to reduce the risk of falling through the ice. Knowing how to judge ice conditions will also help you make more informed decisions while enjoying the pearls of winter.

CAREFULLY CHECK ICE CONDITIONS

- Remember you take a risk anytime you go out onto the ice.
- Ice thickness is not consistent. Water currents, particularly around narrow spots, bridges, inlets and outlets, are always suspect for thin ice.
- When ice fishing, it is always a good idea to drill test holes as you progress out onto a lake to help judge the thickness and character of the ice.
- Beware of ice around partially submerged objects, such as trees, logs brush, embankments or dam structures.
- Don't judge ice strictly by appearance.
- Stay away from cracks, seams, pressure ridges, slushy areas and darker areas that signify thinner ice.
- Beware of ice that forms at the edges of a lake during the fall and melts at the edges first in spring.
- Beware of ice covered with snow. Insulation can keep it cold or prevent it from freezing altogether.

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- Never let children play near frozen waterways or go out onto the ice alone. A buddy should be able to rescue you or go for help if you fall through.
- When changing locations on the ice always walk at least ten yards apart from your buddy. If one person falls through the ice, the other can go for help.
- Before you leave shore, inform someone of your destination and expected time of return.
- Always wear a life jacket or personal flotation device (PFD), over an ordinary snowmobile suit or layered winter clothing. Life jackets can provide excellent flotation and protection from hypothermia (loss of body heat). Specialized coats that float or dry suits are also recommended.
- Assemble a personal safety kit, no larger than the size of a man's wallet, and carry it on your body. The kit should include a lighter, waterproof matches, magnesium fire starter, pocketknife, compass and whistle.
- In addition to the above safety equipment, carry ice picks, a rope and cellular phone. These items could save your life.
- Always keep your pet on a leash. If a pet falls through the ice, do not attempt to rescue your pet. Go for help.
- Do not go out on ice less than four inches thick.



WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE HAS FALLEN THROUGH THE ICE

If you cannot see an opening in the ice and you are sinking to the bottom, look for contrasting colors: Ice openings will appear darker.

- Hold your breath. The sudden shock of cold water results in your body gasping for air once your head is submerged.
- Stay calm. Do not attempt to swim, swimming will cause our body to lose heat much faster than if you stay as still as possible.
- Bring a whistle and use it to attract help.
- Act slowly and deliberately to conserve heat, and move slowly back to where you entered the water. Expect a progressive decrease in your strength and ability to move. Slowly begin to kick your feet until you have enough momentum to raise yourself out of the water. Then remain low to the ice, and roll away from the hole until you are safe.
- If you are wearing a snowmobile helmet and your face is in the water, remove the helmet as quickly as possible because it can fill with water and cause you to drown. Hold onto it to keep afloat.
- Do not stand up until you have moved onto the ground or an area of ice that can bear your full weight.

